Doctor thinks CIA man saw Olson fall to death

The Associated Press

A Maryland psychiatrist who was supposed to treat Fort Detrick biochemist Frank Olson for his reaction to government-administered LSD now says he believes a CIA scientist saw Dr. Olson plunge from a 13-story window in 1953 to his death.

Dr. Robert W. Gibson, former president of the American Psychiatric Association, told *The Associated Press* in a telephone interview Wednesday that he got a phone call the day after Dr. Olson's death from a man he believes was CIA scientist Robert V. Lashbrook.

At the time, Dr. Gibson was on the staff at Chestnut Lodge, a private psychiatric hospital in Rockville where Dr. Olson was scheduled to be taken for treatment after taking part in a CIA experiment using LSD.

"The man said that during the night, he had awakened and that his friend was standing in the middle of the room. He started to say something to him and as he did, Olson ran and hurled himself through the window.

"He said that he had died from the fall, and therefore, they would not be coming," Dr. Gibson said.

Dr. Gibson said he remembered the phone call after hearing recent news reports about a forensic investigation into Dr. Olson's death.

Dr. Lashbrook, who has said he was the only other person in the New York hotel room when Dr. Olson went out the window, has given conflicting accounts of the incident. He has said that he was sleeping and was awakened by breaking glass or a flapping window shade.

Reached at his home in Ojai, Calif., Dr. Lashbrook denied ever calling Chestnut Lodge and reiterated that he never saw Dr. Olson go out the window.

"I certainly never called anyone at Chestnut Lodge. That was completely out of my hands," Dr. Lashbrook said. "I think he's slightly mistaken."

Dr. Gibson, medical director and president of Sheppard and Enoch Pratt Hospital near Baltimore from 1963 to 1992, said the dramatic nature of the incident caused him to remember the telephone conversation.

Dr. Gibson said he explicitly remembers the person saying that he was in the hotel room and witnessed the death because he recalls wondering whether the man himself might need some help dealing with the death.

"This was such an extraordinary incident that it had to have been Lashbrook calling me," Dr. Gibson said. "There couldn't be a coincidence like that."

Forensic investigators exhumed Dr. Olson's body in June to look for evidence of foul play, but their results were inconclusive.